



## Money Well Spent

### Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

#### *Baxter County, Arkansas*

**Baxter County, AR** – For years, the mere mention of the word “tornado” made her extremely nervous. Yet, on February 5, 2008, when a tornado visited the town of Gassville, Arkansas, Jeanann Quattlebaum felt a certain calmness. Less than ten months prior, she and her husband, Robert, had purchased a storm shelter.



“The only warning I had was the television. When I saw that warning, I got nervous. I was here alone with my children,” Mrs. Quattlebaum said. “I called my husband and told him to come home. While waiting for him, I took the kids to the shelter.”

The Quattlebaums have been living in their subdivision for seven years. They purchased their home, which was not equipped with a safe room, from an area builder.

“I’ve always been paranoid of storms,” Quattlebaum said. “My great grandmother and her husband were killed in a tornado in Kansas.”

Arkansas is one of several states in “Tornado Alley,” a term used to describe a broad area of relatively high tornado occurrences in central United States. The state ranks fourth, after Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas, with tornadoes that are F3 and higher.

Quattlebaum continued, “I always wanted a storm shelter, but we felt that we couldn’t afford one until last year. [Then] we heard about Arkansas’ Safe Room Program from a friend.”

Arkansas Residential Safe Room Program assists Arkansas homeowners who choose to install a shelter or safe room on their property. The program covers up to 50 percent of the cost and installation, not to exceed \$1000.00, for shelters or safe rooms built on or after January 21, 1999.

The Quattlebaum’s storm shelter was purchased at a cost of \$2000.00. They received a \$1000.00 rebate from the state. The circular concrete structure is 10 feet in diameter and stands five feet tall. It has the capacity to seat six to eight individuals. During the tornado event of February 5, 2008, it housed six as the tornado touched the lives of Gassville residents. The tornado left behind one fatality and damages to homes and property, which ranged from minimal to extensive.

With proper installation, storm shelters and safe rooms serve as protection from injury or death caused by the dangerous forces of extreme winds. They can also relieve some of the anxiety created by the threat of an oncoming tornado or hurricane.

The decision to build or purchase a shelter should include notifying local emergency managers and family members or others outside the immediate area. This will allow emergency personnel to quickly free the exit should it become blocked by debris.

“Hearing the whistling sound of the tornado made me nervous” Quattlebaum said, “If I had remained in my home, I would have been scared to death. Knowing that I was in the shelter, I was a lot better. I felt secure.”

Additional information can be found at [www.flash.org](http://www.flash.org), [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov), and [www.adem.arkansas.gov](http://www.adem.arkansas.gov).

#### Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region VI**

State: **Arkansas**

County: **Baxter County**

City/Community: **Gassville**

#### Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**

Hazard Type: **Tornado**

Activity/Project Type: **Safe Rooms/Community Shelters**

Structure Type: **Concrete, Reinforced**

Activity/Project Start Date: **05/2007**

Activity/Project End Date: **05/2007**

Funding Source: **State sources; Property Owner, Residential**

Funding Recipient: **Property Owner - Residential**

#### Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$2,000.00 (Actual)**

#### Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal  
Disaster? **No**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**

Tested By Federal Disaster #: **1744 , 02/07/2008**

Repetitive Loss Property? **No**

#### Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: **<http://www.flash.org>**

Reference URL 2: **<http://www.adem.arkansas.gov>**

## Main Points

- The Quattlebaums live in Arkansas, one of the states in "Tornado Alley."
- The Quattlebaums have been living in their subdivision for seven years. Their home was not equipped with a safe room.
- In order to protect their property and the lives of themselves and their children, the Quattlebaums decided to purchase a safe room.
- They obtained information from the Arkansas Residential Safe Room Program.
- Arkansas Residential Safe Room Program assists Arkansas homeowners who choose to install a shelter or safe room on their property.
- The program covers up to 50 percent of the cost and installation, not to exceed \$1000.00, for shelters or safe rooms built on or after January 21, 1999.
- On February 5th, 2008, the safe room was put to the test when a tornado hit their county. The Quattlebaums were safe and sound - all they heard was the whistling of the wind.



The Quattlebaum's Storm Shelter



Jeanann Quattlebaum